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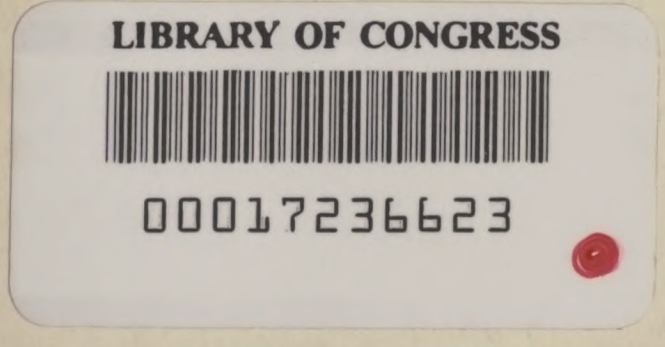

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THE

WORKING-MAN'S LOAF.

CHAPTER I.

LEARNING ECONOMY.

"I HAVE started the fire for you," said Robert Winter to his sister Mary, who had come home only the night before, after a five years' absence in the country. "I thought you wouldn't know where to find things; 'though generally there aren't many things to find."

"Where is father? I thought I heard him before I came down," responded the young girl who was already discouraged at the prospect before her.

"Gone after his beer."

"Beer! Does father drink beer?"

"Guess you'd think so, if you knew as much about it as I do. He always goes for some before breakfast; then he takes another mug on his way to the shop; another after dinner, and I don't know how many more."

"It must cost a good deal of money."

"Of course it does. Men who sell beer sell it for money, and I think it is pretty mean to spend so much for what a man can do without better than not, and then be always complaining of how much

it costs to support a family. I hope you can make things different, but mother can't; and she is all discouraged. She didn't send for you as long as she could do the work. She hated to have you come to such a poor place."

"Never mind that, now, Robert. Tell me where the coffee is."

"I know where it ought to be, but half the time there isn't any, the same as now."

"Then bring some tea."

"Father don't like tea."

"What will he drink with his breakfast?"

"Nothing, and make up with beer afterward."

"Is there any meat to be cooked?"

"No; we don't have meat for breakfast, and I don't know of anything in the house to eat, except some bread and butter. The bread is pretty dry, but perhaps father'll bring a fresh loaf when he comes back."

"I could make a nice toast if I had some milk."

"Not a drop in the house. We used to have a milkman come every day, but since we moved here we buy it at the corner store, when we have any. There comes father. You can ask him for money to pay for some milk, if you want to, and I will go for it."

Upon the request being made, Mr. Winter fumbled in his pockets, and at last gave Mary pennies to buy a pint of milk, saying a little sharply:

"We can't afford to use milk as they do at your Uncle Daniel's. You'll have to learn economy, if you are going to live with us."

"Why, father; Aunt Rachel is the most economical woman in town, and she has taught me her way of doing things," answered Mary. "I don't think you will have any reason to complain of my extravagance."

"Well, well, child, I didn't mean to blame you; only money comes hard, and we must be careful how we spend it."

Fortunately, there was plenty of butter for the toast, and enough was saved from the scanty pint of milk for Mrs. Winter's tea. Mr. Winter ate his breakfast in silence, and was hurrying away when his daughter said to him:

"I suppose you will send home something for dinner."

"I sha'n't have any time to see to it," he replied; adding, as he threw down a quarter: "You must make that go as far as you can for dinner. I guess the last potatoes I bought are all gone, so you must look out for some."

Before Mary had time to think what she could do with so small an amount, her younger brothers came down, clamoring for breakfast. More toast was made, leaving only two slices of bread for her mother and herself. Then the boys rushed out, and she was left alone.

Presently her mother called, and she went into the little bedroom, looking as cheerful as possible, that she might not add to the burden she wished to lighten.

"I will bring you a cup of tea and some toast, and then perhaps you will feel able to come into

the kitchen and tell me what you would like to have me do to-day," she said, after listening to complaints of wakefulness and a severe headache.

"Do anything you please, only don't trouble me about it," was replied. "I am so tired, trying to do with nothing, that I don't care much what happens, if I can only rest. It is hard for you, child; coming from your Uncle Daniel's, too, where they have enough of everything. I hope you won't blame me for sending for you."

"No, mother. I shall be glad if I can help you, but I don't know what there is in the house to do with."

"There isn't much of anything. That is the trouble, child. Your father used to be a good provider, when we were first married; but he has changed. I don't want to find fault with him. I don't suppose I have done as well as I might, but I am clear discouraged. Have you learned to cook?"

"Yes, mother. Aunt Rachel was sick, last year, and I did all the cooking for more than three months."

"You had enough to cook with."

"Yes, mother; but Uncle Daniel and Aunt Rachel are obliged to be economical in everything. All the boys want to go to college, and Uncle Daniel says if they do, money must be found under every stone on the old farm."

"They have four boys, the same as we, and your father says our boys must go to work to earn their own living."

"I thought father earned good wages."

"He does. He earns enough to send you all to school, and provide all we need. But I won't say any more about it. You will find it all out for yourself before you have been here a great while. I hope you will manage better than I have, and perhaps your father will hear to you more than he has to me."

"But if you and I should try together, mother."

"I can't try," interrupted Mrs. Winter. "If I was fit to die, I should wish I was dead and out of the way."

"Think of the boys; how much they need you.'

"I have thought of them until I am almost crazy. They are running wild, and I can't help it. They were good little boys, but they are all wrong now Robert learned to read when he wasn't much more than a baby, and I was so proud of him, I calculated he would make a grand scholar."

The mother's face lighted up with something like animation, while talking of her boys as they had been; but when recalled to present necessities, she only reiterated her inability to meet the demands of the hour.

"If you have twenty-five cents, you have more than I have had for a long time. You must make it go as far as you can," she said at last, sighing wearily.

It was some relief to Mary when she found that the tea and toast she had prepared were evidently relished; yet when she returned to the kitchen and saw the disorder around her, she began to weep. She knew not what to do. How she longed for

some one to advise and comfort her! Just then, as if in answer to her wish, while tears were streaming down her cheeks, a neatly dressed old lady opened the kitchen door and came in.

"I am one of your neighbors, and I wanted to see you," said the visitor cheerily. "I knew your mother was expecting you, and I thought, may be you would be glad to see even an old woman like me. I hope you aren't home-sick."

"I am afraid I was, but you look so much like one of Aunt Rachel's neighbors, I think my home-sickness will go away. I can't tell you how glad I am you came," responded Mary.

"I am glad, too. I had a daughter by the name of Mary, and the glint of her hair was like yours. I am always looking to find one like her. She and her father left me the same week, and I have missed them ever since; 'though there was never a better boy than my Ernest. Ernest Landaff is his name, and I am Mrs. Landaff. I was on my way to market. I thought perhaps you would be going out to buy your dinner."

"I don't know how to buy a dinner. I have only twenty-five cents for everything. It is all different from what it was at Uncle Daniel's, and mother says she can't help me. I don't know how to begin."

"What have you in the house?"

"A little tea and some butter. It took all the bread for breakfast, and there isn't any flour."

"Then we must get some corn-meal. I will show you how to make good cakes with no better mixing than hot water and salt. You must have some cof-

fee, with sugar and milk, for your father; then a few potatoes and some bones for a soup. You won't have that ready until supper, but it will be something to look forward to, and most men are willing to take soup for supper. You won't mind my telling you that men and boys are more likely to stay at home if things are made tidy and pleasant for them. If your father sees that you do well with twenty-five cents, he may give you more to-morrow; and as soon as you can, it will be best for you to buy in larger quantities. Get the boys on your side, and you can do almost anything."

"Do you believe I can?" asked Mary.

"Yes, if you start right. Do your best, and ask God to bless your efforts," was replied.

"Oh, Mrs. Landaff, you are a Christian; I know you are, or you wouldn't have said that. It is the first Christian word I have heard since I came here. It is all so different from what it was at Uncle Daniel's."

"But remember, my dear, you can pray, as well here as there, and you can keep your hands busy at the same time. Your mother has been so poorly, it is no wonder the work has gone behind. If you have only corn-cake and butter for dinner, it will be relished better if your table is set neatly. You know how to do that."

"Yes, ma'am, I do, and I will try to make the room so pleasant, mother will be glad to see it."

CHAPTER II.

CORN-CAKE AND MILK.

"WELL, well, Mary, this looks comfortable," said Mr. Winter, when he came in to dinner. "The coffee smells good too. And corn-cakes, I declare. I haven't seen any on our table for years."

"I hope you will like them," was responded.

"No trouble about that. Here, Robert, go for two quarts of milk, and we will have an old-fashioned dinner. Don't stop on the way."

Robert was soon back, and everybody praised the dinner, except Mary, who found it impossible to eat a single mouthful.

"Soup for supper, did you say?" remarked her father, as he was preparing to leave the house, after she had told him of her marketing. "I never imagined a quarter could be made to go so far; but you will need money to buy some bread."

He threw down a dime, and when he had gone, Robert said:

"I can get ever so much broken bread for ten cents. It is just as good as the loaves, only it is broken."

"Then get it; and while you are away, I will make a cup of tea for mother. Perhaps we can persuade her to come out here to drink it."

"I wish you would. Mother has had a hard time.

I am old enough to know that, but it doesn't make things any better, to complain and not try."

"No, Robert, it doesn't. I am going to try, and I want you to help me."

"I will. I am not the worst fellow in the world, and may be, if you should take me in hand, you might make something of me."

There was a quiver in the boy's voice as he said this, and a tear in his eye as he hurried from the room; leaving Mary to wonder at what had transpired. She was thankful the dinner had proved a success; but there was still much to be done, and she was so tired, it seemed impossible for her to work on through the day. Yet when Robert returned, bringing a generous supply of bread for both supper and breakfast, she tried to look on the bright side.

"I never got half so much before, and it is all good too," he said pleasantly; adding: "If you were like Mrs. Landaff, you would put all the small pieces by themselves, and make the rest look so nice, there wouldn't anybody mind its being broken."

"Do you know how to do it?"

"I guess I could. If I should wash my hands real clean, should you be willing I should try?"

"I should be glad to have you."

"Then here goes, and after it is all spread on the plates, you coax mother out here. I should think she would do almost anything you want her to. I would. I tell you, Mary, it has been pretty awful since we moved here. This is the worst place we ever lived in. We always had one room besides

the kitchen and bedrooms. The bedrooms were a good deal larger too. It is awful dark and poky here when it storms."

"It would be lighter, if we should give the windows a good scrubbing."

"So it would, and I am ready to help you do it. Mother used to keep things cleaner. I did the best I could with the floor yesterday, but it don't look very well. The boys wouldn't let it dry without being tracked."

"Where are the boys now?"

"Somewhere around. They will keep pretty well out of the way until they get hungry."

"But they ought not to be in the street. Don't they go to school?"

"They did, before we came here. Since then, they have been too ragged to go anywhere decent."

"About Sunday, Robert. What do you all do then?"

"The same as other days. What did you do at Uncle Daniel's?"

"We went to church and Sunday-school. Then we read our Bibles and our library books, and when it was so dark we couldn't see without a lamp, we sung and talked together. Aunt Rachel said we ought to make a Sabbath day's journey towards Heaven."

"If that is the way you lived there, you can't ever live with us. Father don't mind anything about Sunday. He isn't a bit like Aunt Rachel."

"I am afraid he isn't; but they were brought up together, and she told me I must try to lead

him back into the right path. Do you think I could?"

"Perhaps so, if you could get him to stop drinking beer."

"Does mother drink beer?" asked Mary half under her breath.

"She does when she can get it, but father don't let her have much lately," was replied.

"Do you drink it?"

"No, I don't. I used to, but I stopped that and tobacco more than a year ago. Will drinks it when he can get it, and he smokes too."

"What of Clem and Luke?"

"Well, Clem isn't so bad, but if Luke goes on as he has begun, he will be the worst of the lot. We are a bad set, anyway, and it must be dreadful for you to come to live with us."

"I was sorry to come, but Aunt Rachel said it was my duty, and if I can make things better, I sha'n't mind the hard work. If you will stand by me, we can do a good deal."

"I will. You can count on me every time," said the boy heartily. "It was a letter you wrote to me that made me give up beer and tobacco."

"But, Robert, it takes money to buy beer and tobacco. How did you get the money?"

"Worked for it. Sometimes I did jobs 'round the saloons, and almost anything else. Men and boys will do more to get tobacco and liquor than they will to get something to eat when they are hungry. Didn't you know that?"

"I don't know much about tobacco and liquor,

except what I have read; only I remember that father used to smoke. Uncle Daniel won't have tobacco on his premises. The boys have all promised never to use it; and as for beer, or liquor of any kind, I don't believe they know how it tastes."

"I wish I didn't, and I wish my brothers didn't."

"Does father like to have them drink beer and smoke?"

"You wouldn't think he did, by the way he scolds them when he sees them at it; but he doesn't seem to care much, if they only keep out of his sight."

While thus talking, the bread had been nicely assorted; the best slices being saved for mother, and laid on the only really pretty plate in the house.

"Now, if I had some of Aunt Rachel's currant jelly, I believe I could tempt mother to come to the table," said Mary.

At that moment Will looked into the kitchen, when his brother asked him if he had any money.

"Yes; earned it since dinner," was replied.

"Lend it to me, to get some jelly for mother," said Robert; "I will pay you to-morrow."

"But I want it now. I am awful dry, and I haven't had a smoke to-day."

A boy twelve years old, he seemed to consider that these two facts entitled him to sympathy; and without staying to hear more, closed the door behind him.

"Such depravity!" exclaimed his sister. "What will become of him! What is father thinking about, to let him go on so!"

"A man who does as father does can't say much

to his boys for following his example," answered Robert, with an air of indifference.

"No, I don't suppose he can; but I wish I was back at Uncle Daniel's, and didn't know anything about it," sobbed Mary, adding presently: "Why, you aren't even respectable. I have read about people living so, but I never expected to live so myself."

"Don't cry; don't," urged the boy, coming close to his sister, and resting his hand upon her shoulder. "I know it is dreadful for you. I have wanted to run away and get out of it; but when I knew you was coming, I thought perhaps there would be a chance for me here at home. There is an evening school, not very far off, where they teach just what I want to learn. If I could be clean and decent, to go there evenings, I shouldn't mind working days."

"You *can* be and you *shall* be," responded Mary, throwing her arms around his neck and kissing him. "If it depends upon me, you shall have a chance to be somebody. Aunt Rachel says where two are agreed about anything, they can do wonders, with the Lord's blessing; and, Robert, we will ask the Lord to bless us, won't we?"

"I am afraid I don't know about that, but I will do the best I can, and you must do the rest," answered Robert to this proposition, and so their compact was sealed.

Then their thoughts turned to their mother, who, after much persuasion, was induced to come into the kitchen; not, however, until she had complained of weakness, and asked Robert if there was any ale or beer in the house. He was glad to be able to tell

her there was none; and as she had no money, she did not presume to say more about it. He endeavored to interest her in some plans for the improvement of their home; but she professed herself utterly indifferent. She drank the tea prepared for her, and ate two slices of toast, saying, at last, that she wished the soup had been ready for dinner.

"Your father will like it. He always liked soup, and I am glad Mary could get so much with so little money. Mrs. Landaff is a good friend to have, 'though she gives her advice sometimes when she isn't asked. Her son has the letting of some of the houses 'round here, and that is why they moved into this street."

"Ernest Landaff isn't much like the other men on the street," replied Robert. "I wish I knew as much as he does."

"I wish you could have a chance in the world, but your father says you must go to work, and I suppose you must," said his mother.

"All the same, I am going to have a chance, mother. Mary is going to help me; and if we all try together, we can make things better here at home; I know we can."

Meanwhile, Mary had commenced a thorough work in her mother's room, which she continued, notwithstanding objections and protestations; effecting such an improvement as to call forth some words of commendation.

"Your Aunt Rachel was always particular, and so was your grandmother," said Mrs. Winter. "Your father used to talk a good deal about it, but he don't care how things look now."

CHAPTER III.

LIKE HER GRANDMOTHER.

When Mr. Winter came from his work that evening, he looked around for a minute, and then went into the shed, where on a rough bench he found a basin of water and some soap; while hanging above it were a clean towel, a bit of looking-glass, and a comb. With these conveniences before him, he could not neglect to use them; and this done, he wished he was better dressed.

Supper was on the table, which was covered with a white cloth; and what was more surprising still, the boys presented an array of clean faces. The soup was good, and the coffee, although not strong, was palatable. Mary thought she had never been so tired before in all her life, but her father more than repaid her for what she had done, when he said :

"You make me think of your grandmother. She knew how to do everything in the best way. You have done so well with your marketing, I will give you fifty cents for to-morrow; and I may as well give it to you now, before I have a chance to spend it."

"Thank you," she replied, as she took the money; thinking of what she would buy for her mother.

Her father lingered a little after eating his sup-

per, yet she was not disappointed when he left the house, knowing, as she did, that he would probably spend the remainder of the evening in a beer-saloon. Robert kept his brothers with him, and induced them to go early to bed. Mrs. Winter desired to be left to herself, and Mary was glad when the last work for the day was done, and she could go to the closet-like room where she was to sleep. As soon as he heard her step, Robert came in, apologizing for his intrusion by saying :

"I wanted to tell you how much good you have done me. I begin to feel as though I might, sometime, know more and be better than I am now. Are you going to read in the Bible?" he asked, as she took the precious book in her hand.

"Yes, I am," she replied. "I read in it every day."

"Then let me hear you."

After reading a chapter, Mary waited for a minute, and then falling upon her knees, prayed earnestly for a blessing upon each member of the family; calling each by name. Rising, she turned with a questioning glance to her brother, who said :

"I will do my part of the work, and I know I shall be better. I can't help it, now you are here."

The next morning was not so bad as the preceding. The children were all in their places at the table; and after breakfast, without really knowing how it was accomplished, they were all busy in helping to carry out their sister's plans. The little yard in front of the house was cleared of rubbish. The shed was swept; the outside of the windows was

washed ; and plenty of water was brought for washing clothes.

Will, who was an inveterate whittler, had been furnished with a pattern for a bracket, which he proposed to cut from an old cigar-box. When told of what his cousins had accomplished in that way, he said resolutely :

"I can do as well as they can. I don't allow any boy to go ahead of me, when I get started."

"Then I hope you will start in the right way, and"——

"And what?" he asked, looking to Mary, who had left her sentence unfinished.

"Stick to teetotal temperance."

"So that's it, is it," he responded with a knowing wink. "Is that what they are doing at Uncle Daniel's?"

"Yes, every one of them," was replied.

"I don't know about that for us. You see, we live in the city, and that makes a difference."

Here the subject was dropped. Mary was ready to go out, and she thought Will could be safely left to his own reflections. Presuming upon the kindness of Mrs. Landaff, she called to ask further advice.

"You have started well," said this neighbor, when told what had been accomplished. "Now if you have patience to continue in well doing, you will be sure of a reward."

"I shall do as well as I can," answered the young girl, who was fast learning some of the hard lessons of life.

With Mrs. Landaff's assistance, the half-dollar was judiciously expended. On their way home, they were met by Robert, who took his sister's parcels, asking her to hurry.

"Mother came out and wanted Will to get her some beer," he whispered confidentially. "There is an old woman that lives in an alley back of us who keeps beer to sell, and takes almost anything for pay. I told Will not to stir a step, but—— There he is, this minute."

Robert left the parcels, and with a bound rushed after his brother, whom he presently led into the kitchen. When Mrs. Winter saw them, she asked no questions, but with a look upon her face expressing both mortification and disappointment, she went to her room.

"There, now, don't you ever bring a drop of beer into this house for anybody," said Robert, as he released the culprit.

"Mother told me to get it, and Luke heard her," was replied sulkily. "It isn't any worse for her to drink beer, than it is for father. Beer is good. It makes folks strong, and I like it."

Here followed an animated discussion of its merits, and of the value of money. In this discussion all took part, and several questions were settled by vote, which Mary took care should seem of some importance. Later in the day, she went to her mother's room and asked abruptly:

"What is to be done about the boys' clothes? They are ragged and dirty. If you would help about it, we could make them more decent, but I

can never do it alone. I am sure you would be better if you would go out of doors a little. We should all be so much happier, too, to have you with us. It must be lonely for father when he comes home, and you not ready to meet him."

"Your father don't care, if he can only get all the beer and tobacco he wants," replied the woman in a querulous tone. "He drinks and smokes so much, there isn't anything left for the rest of us. A glass of beer does me good when I am so weak and faint, but he wants it all himself."

"I don't believe beer does anybody good," replied Mary. "Anyway, I should think things were about as bad as they can be here. Robert and I are going to do the best we can. We don't mean to be dragged down by beer or any other kind of liquor. If Robert can't go to a day-school, he is going in the evening, and I am going to help him all I can to be a good scholar."

"That sounds like your father. He used to think he could do anything he undertook."

"I don't believe but what he can, mother. He can give up drinking beer, and save money to buy a pretty home, if we all help him."

"Why, child, what has come over you!" exclaimed Mrs. Winter, raising her head from the pillow, and looking earnestly in her daughter's face.

"Nothing new, mother. Aunt Rachel brought me up to be sure of some things. She makes up her mind what is best to do, and then she does it."

"You can't expect me to be like your Aunt Rachel," said Mrs. Winter.

"I wish you were," said Mary involuntarily, and then blamed herself for having spoken without taking time to choose her words.

"I didn't think you would turn against me so soon," sobbed the unhappy mother. "Your father finds fault with me, and that is all I can bear. I know it is hard for you, child," she added in a different tone.

"It *is* hard," was replied gently. "I am used to work, but I have always had some time for rest, every day, even when Aunt Rachel was sickest. I am willing to do all I can, but it is too much for me to do all the work needed in this family. I can not live in a dirty house, and see the boys covered with rags, instead of wearing decent clothes."

"What *will* you do?"

"If I can not have things more respectable, I shall write to Aunt Rachel about it, and ask her what my duty is."

"Your father would feel dreadfully to have her know how he lives."

"Then he must live differently. We must all go to work together and have a comfortable home."

"Mother Winter over again, and I never could suit her," sighed her daughter-in-law, when Mary had returned to the kitchen.

CHAPTER IV.

DISCOURAGED.

"It is no more than I expected," said Mrs. Landaff, in response to Robert Winter's announcement that his sister was too sick to go down-stairs. "A girl like her can hardly go through such a fortnight's work as she has had, without suffering for it. I know you have helped her all you could, but the hardest of it has come upon her."

"I know it, Mrs. Landaff, and I don't know what we shall do now. I got breakfast, myself, this morning, and we boys washed the dishes and made things look as well as we could. But there is the dinner to get."

"What did your father say?"

"Said he was sorry about Mary, and I must take good care of her. There is another thing that troubles me, Mrs. Landaff. Now the new beer-saloon is opened at the head of the street, I am afraid it will be worse for father, and I am afraid the boys will go there, in spite of all I can do. Then we shall be worse off than ever before. It seems as though the beer men have their saloons in the very worst places for everybody. I wish all the beer in the world was poured into the ocean, and there couldn't be any more made."

"I wish so too, Robert; but our wishing will not

make it so. We can only try to prevent people drinking it. The first thing to do now is to look after Mary."

"She wanted me to ask you to please come over and see her. She said it would make her feel better. Mother don't do anything for her."

Mrs. Landaff needed no urging. Accompanying Robert, she went to his sister's room, which she found as clean as it could be made with only soap and water; although, at best, it was a dreary place, with its dingy walls, bare floor, and hard, narrow bed.

"You are so kind," murmured the tired girl. "I didn't know what to do but send for you."

"Poor child; I am glad you did. You have overworked, and need rest. You must lie here until you feel better."

"But how can I, when I am needed in the kitchen every minute! I could not stand long enough to dress myself this morning. Oh, dear! I wish I was back at Uncle Daniel's. Sometimes I almost wish I never had gone there. Then I shouldn't know the difference between there and here."

"The difference is what you need to know, so that you can teach the rest. Think of Robert. You have done a work for him, already, that will pay for a good many hours of headache."

"I couldn't stay here if it was not for him."

"He says you cooked enough, yesterday, to last two or three days."

"I did, except meat. It seemed so good to have enough to use, that I kept right on cooking. I

planned to do some sewing to-day, but I must give that up. I always have a sick day when I get too tired; but Aunt Rachel was so careful about it, I didn't have a great many. I am afraid mother will go back to her old discouraged ways, and there is something else too. Do you know about it?"

"Yes, dear, I know all about it, and it don't do any good for you to worry. You can trust Robert not to let anything wrong happen until you can go down. I always liked Robert, and Ernest says there is more good in him than you would think at first sight. He doesn't have anything to do with the boys around here."

"It seems to me a dreadful place to live."

"There are many worse. But you are talking too much for the good of your head. Should you mind if I should send you a little table for your room? I have one I am not using, and I should be glad to lend it to you."

"I should be very thankful for it. I had a prettier room at Uncle Daniel's."

"Then I will have Robert bring it over. It will just fit this corner."

Mrs. Landaff said good-bye and was gone, but her visit had done much to comfort her young neighbor. Presently Will asked to come in, bringing tea and toast. Then appeared Robert with the little table and its scarlet cover, which so brightened up the room that it seemed far less dreary to its occupant. Clem brought her two geranium leaves he had found in the street, and her mother sent her a pleasant message.

After all, there were some compensations for her illness, and thinking of these, she fell asleep. It was past noon when she awoke, and although she was still weak, her headache was quite gone, and she could think clearly. Just before supper, Robert opened her door softly, impatient to tell her of the opening of the new saloon.

"They give free lunches all this afternoon and evening," he said in an excited tone. "Codfish and crackers, to make everybody dry, and then there will be a big sale of beer. That is the way they do. I have kept watch of the boys, so they haven't been there, but father will be sure to go."

"Will he go before he comes home?"

"I don't believe he will; but then you can't ever tell what such a man will do. O Mary, you don't know; but it is the beer, and tobacco, and liquor, that keeps folks so awfully poor. They live all around in these houses. Ernest Landaff says he is going to see what he can do about it."

"Are he and his mother very poor?"

"Not very, 'though they used to be richer. They lost lots of money that was in a bank and some other place; and that is the reason Ernest has to work to take care of his mother. He expects to be better off sometime, and I hope he will. He is just splendid. He has asked me, two or three times, to go to Sunday-school, but I didn't say anything to you about it, because I haven't decent clothes to wear, and I can't get them either. When I go to work I will have them; but, Mary, there are two places where I won't work, no matter what father says. I

won't work in a cigar factory, or in a liquor-saloon of any kind."

"What if father tells you to?"

"I will run away to Uncle Daniel's, and get him to find me a place with some farmer. You see I have thought it all over. I have made up my mind and I will stick to it. There are lots of hard places where boys work, but I don't mind the hard."

"Never mind about that now, Robert. There will be a way out of our trouble if we only do as well as we can. This morning, I was so discouraged, I thought it would be easier to die than try to go any further, but I feel differently now. I didn't know there was so much wickedness in the world till I came here, and it seems to me that most of it comes from what Uncle Daniel calls the cursed liquor."

"It does. Why, it is just awful. Men who begin with beer don't very often stop with it. They take to whisky after a while. I think father drinks whisky sometimes."

"Oh! don't say that, or I shall be discouraged again. I want to look on the bright side if there is any."

"You must *make* it before you can *look* on it."

CHAPTER V.

THE BURSTING OF THE STORM.

ROBERT knew from appearances that "a storm was brewing," yet wisely forbore to trouble his sister with anticipations of evil. Since her illness her father had treated her with more consideration, giving her money for various purposes without complaint or dictation. All this was changed, however, when one morning she asked for her usual allowance.

"Make the most of it, for I don't know when you will get any more," he said surlily. "The company talk of cutting down our wages, and if they do I shall strike. It is all I can do to live now. A cut-down would starve us out, and I shall strike."

"Strike!" repeated Mary.

"Yes; quit work until the company comes to terms," answered her father.

"And so earn nothing?"

"Yes; I am not a slave to work for starvation wages. If they won't give me fair wages, I won't work."

"How much will they cut you down?"

"Ten per cent. is what they are talking of, and that will make forty cents a day difference with me."

"Forty cents!" exclaimed the daughter in a tone

expressing the utmost astonishment. "Do you earn four dollars a day?"

"Yes, about that," was replied with some hesitation.

"That is more than a thousand dollars a year. Aunt Rachel would say we ought to live on half of that, and live well too."

"She don't know anything of what it costs to live here in the city, where we have to buy everything we eat, and pay rent besides. They own their house and farm."

"But I have heard Uncle Daniel say he earned the money to pay for them, and he never had more than twenty-five dollars a month besides his board. There was a small mortgage on the farm when he was married, and he and Aunt Rachel worked hard to pay it. They would think themselves rich if they had five hundred dollars a year to live on."

"So should we, but we don't have it now," said Robert. "Men earn enough; that isn't the trouble; it is the way they spend their money. Most of it goes for beer, and whisky, and tobacco; and the women and children have to live on the leavings."

At this, Mr. Winter's face was fairly livid with rage, yet he did not deny his son's statement. He only replied:

"When you act for yourself, we will see what you do with your money."

"Yes, sir; but I can tell you now, that I shall have decent clothes and a decent house to live in. What I earn won't go for beer or tobacco."

"You can do as you please, and so shall I," was

responded, as if thus the whole matter was settled.

"But, father, here we are, and we can not any of us do as we please. We are obliged to do as we can, and you are the one to decide what we *can* do. I don't want to speak disrespectful to you, but I think it is dreadful to live as we do. Now I know how much you earn, I know there is no need of it. We could live decently on half what you earn, and we don't live decently now, do we, father?"

Mary waited for a reply to her question, and receiving none, asked another:

"Father, wouldn't you like to live in a pleasant house, with nice, clean rooms, and have a garden, with trees and flowers?"

"Of course I should like it, if I could afford it. Who wouldn't? But I don't intend to be catechized by my children, or told what I ought to do. I can manage my own affairs without any of their help."

Mary heartily wished this was true, although she did not say so. Had she been like many young girls, she would have given up in despair, and made no further effort to stem the tide. But perseverance was one of her marked characteristics, and there was too much at stake to be easily relinquished. So she struggled on until help appeared in the person of Aunt Rachel, who came unheralded.

"Brother Robert!" exclaimed the fine-looking woman, who met Mr. Winter as he came into the kitchen, where she had already made herself quite at home.

"You here, Rachel!" he responded, while his man-

ner betrayed the utmost surprise, not unmingled with regret.

"Yes, I am here. I wished to see how Mary would manage as a housekeeper, and besides, Robert, I wished to see you, my only brother. Mary had been with us so long, she seemed like one of our own. The boys miss her, too, as much as my husband and I do, and they told me to be sure and take her back with me; but we won't talk of that now."

"I don't think we will. We never can spare her again very long at a time. She makes me think of mother every day."

"She is a good deal like her grandmother. I could always see that. If she undertakes to do anything, she is likely to go through with it. You and I have changed since we saw each other before. It has been longer than it ought to be."

"I don't see as you have changed much, Rachel. Your cheeks are a little fuller, and you have some gray hairs, but you are nearly the same as five years ago. *I* have changed."

"Yes, you have. You have grown stouter, and you have more color in your face. I hope your health is good."

"Pretty good generally."

Rachel Stearns talked on, seeking thus to cover her own feelings, as well as the evident chagrin of her brother. He had not told her that he was glad to see her, and indeed, she could not help knowing that he regretted her coming. Mrs. Winter, too, was troubled at the unexpected visit, but the boys were delighted.

"Where will Aunt Rachel sleep?" asked Robert, anxious for her comfort.

"She must sleep with me; there is no other place," replied Mary.

"But such a small room, and such a hard bed. Father is ashamed; I know he is, and I am glad of it. Mother is ashamed too. Perhaps it will make her start up to do better. Anyway, Aunt Rachel has come at the right time. Ernest Landaff says the men in the shop where father works are going to strike to-morrow or the day after, and, I don't know certain, but I think father has engaged a place for me in a cigar factory. I mean to tell Aunt Rachel all about it."

Mr. Winter did not go out after supper except for a short smoke. He devoted the evening to his sister, with whom he talked of old times and old friends, their conversation at length drifting back to their own families and fortunes.

"The farm has given us a good living, with plenty of hard work," remarked Mrs. Stearns. "We don't expect to make money as you do, but we manage to lay by a little every year, and now the boys are getting older, their father makes some ventures he would hardly think of making alone. Our boys are all scholars. How is it with yours?"

"I don't know so much about that, perhaps, as I ought to," replied Mr. Winter. "The truth is, I have left the children mostly for their mother to manage. I go to my work pretty early, and when I get through at night, I am too tired to do much more than get ready for bed. I should be glad to give my boys a

chance to go to school, but what with sickness and hard times, I haven't managed to do any more than make the year come 'round ; so I don't see any way but they must go to work."

"Our boys have always worked, but they have never missed school when there was one, any more than Mary has. We had planned to send her and Nelson to an academy, next year. It would require economy to do it ; but we are used to economy, and they would learn enough to pay all the cost. I wonder if you know how good a scholar Mary is."

"I am afraid not. She has been so busy about the house since she came home, that we haven't thought of much else. When her mother gets stronger I hope she will have an easier time."

CHAPTER VI.

AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

MR. WINTER had received a new revelation. He had thought of his daughter only as a worker, bound to give him her best service. True, he had known that it could not be a pleasant change for her to leave the old farm-house, in which she had spent five years, and come to such a home as he would give her, but he had by no means appreciated the sacrifice she thus made. It was because of her delicate health that she had been intrusted to Aunt Rachel's care, and now that she was well and strong, her place seemed to her father to be with him, although he had little to offer in return for the services he claimed.

Thinking of all this, he passed a sleepless night, and arose the next morning in no enviable frame of mind; when, to add to his discomfort, his sister was the first to meet him.

"Do you go to your work before breakfast?" she asked, as he turned to greet her.

"No, but I was going out to do an errand," he answered. "I rather think some meat is needed for breakfast."

"Then I will go with you," was responded heartily. "I am always an early riser, and I should like to see how people look about here when they first get up."

Mr. Winter knew his sister too well to attempt to leave her behind; so he made a virtue of necessity, and went to the nearest market instead of the saloon. For once, he was obliged to dispense with his mug of beer, as an appetizer for breakfast; which, however, was so much better than usual, that he did it ample justice.

He went out directly, but after walking a short distance, he turned back and called to Robert, who went to him at once, when he said:

"I engaged a place for you in Hunter's cigar factory, on Cross Street, yesterday, and I told him you would be there in good season to-day. So you can go right along now, without going to the house again."

"No, sir; I shall not work in a cigar factory," answered the boy. "I promised, and wrote it out in black and white, more than a year ago, that I never would have anything to do with tobacco again as long as I live. I am bound to keep my promise, and I couldn't if I went into the cigar factory to work. Besides, I hate the very thought of it. I will do anything else, except to work in a drinking-saloon. I don't care how hard or how dirty it is."

"You will work where I put you," responded Mr. Winter, so angry that it was with difficulty he could speak.

"Yes, sir; except in a cigar factory or drinking-saloon," was the fearless reply.

"Has Mary been putting you up to this?"

"No, sir; I put myself up to it. I have thought of it a good while and made up my mind." Then

the boy's voice changed to one of entreaty, rather than defiance, as he said: "Father, I want to be somebody, and have a chance in the world, the same as my cousins. I don't expect to be helped as they are, but I want to be left so I can do for myself. I don't want to grow up like the men in this neighborhood. I should rather die."

This appeal touched the father's heart; yet too proud to acknowledge it, he gruffly bade Robert to leave him and say no more.

Mrs. Stearns had not expected to find her brother's family living as they should, yet she was wholly unprepared for what she saw. Mary had done all that a young girl could do under such unfavorable circumstances; but there was needed a thorough and radical change, quite beyond the power of any one person to effect. She was considering how far she might venture in the way of remonstrance and advice, when her nephew rushed in, exclaiming:

"There, Mary, I have done it. Father told me to go to work in a cigar factory, and I told him I wouldn't. I said I would go anywhere else, except into a drinking-saloon; but I never will work there or in a cigar factory."

"Cigar factory!" repeated Aunt Rachel, taking the boy by the shoulders, and turning him around so that she could look him squarely in the face.

"Yes, ma'am," he answered. "It is a place full of tobacco. You have to handle it and breathe it, and almost eat it; and I can't."

The strain had been so great, that here Robert broke down; bursting into tears and sobbing bit-

terly. When he could control himself, his first words were :

"Aunt Rachel, I suppose you think I am an awful wicked boy, to tell my father I won't do anything ; but if you knew how hard I have tried to do better than I used to, I don't believe you would blame me."

"I don't blame you," was replied. "If it is necessary for you to earn money to help support the family, there must be some better place for you to work than in a cigar factory. What wages would you get there ?"

"I don't know. I want to learn father's trade, but I want to learn more than he has. If I could work as well as he can, and draft for myself, you see I should have a good deal better chance than he has had. I want to learn more about arithmetic, too, and I want to learn to keep books, besides lots of other things."

"You ought to go to school. That is what all of you boys ought to do."

"Yes, ma'am ; but we haven't had decent clothes. Mary has washed and mended for us, and father bought me and Will new suits, day before yesterday. That is why we look so much better than Clem and Luke. It is a shame ; and I wish there never could be any more beer and tobacco in the whole world. That is what father spends his money for, instead of for what he ought to. There, I didn't mean to say it, but I can't take it back, and every word of it is true."

"I am glad you are on the right side of the ques-

tion," said Mrs. Stearns, thus breaking the awkward silence after Robert's outburst.

"I am, and so is Mary; and we are trying to bring the boys around."

"I hope you will succeed, and of course your mother will help you."

"I can't help much about anything," responded Mrs. Winter. "I wish things were different, but I can't change them."

"It is hard for you, sister, I know, but I can not think of any situation I could be in, where I shouldn't keep trying to right what was wrong, and make the most of all I had."

"I never was like you, Rachel."

"It is not necessary you should be. But I have come to stay with you two weeks, and in that time I want to help every one of you all I can. You would have better health if you lived in brighter, sunnier rooms, and went out of doors every day. I am not sure but the best thing you can do is to go home with me and spend the summer."

"I wish *I* could go," cried Robert.

"What could Mary do without you?"

"She might go too."

"Not to leave your father. I don't see yet how we are to bring things around, but there will be a way. There always is, when it is really best there should be."

"That is what Mrs. Landaff says, Aunt Rachel. Next to you, I guess she is the best woman in the world. She is the one who told Mary about marketing, and sent her the little table. She comes in al-

most every day, too, to bring mother something nice to eat. Her son Ernest is splendid, and I want to be like him."

Will and Clem and Luke did not talk much in the presence of their aunt, but they were interested listeners to all that she said; and before she had been with them twenty-four hours, they were ready to indorse her opinions and decisions.

"Except what she says about beer and tobacco," whispered Luke, who was not yet nine years old. "I don't believe a woman knows as well about them as boys and men do."

"You don't, do you?" rejoined Robert, who had heard the remarks not intended for his ears. "Aunt Rachel knows more than a thousand boys like you, and the best thing you can do is to do as she tells you."

CHAPTER VII.

BLUNT'S SALOON.

MARY and Robert Winter intended to keep their brothers under strict supervision, but in some way Clem made his escape, and after a short absence, returned in a state of great excitement. Beckoning to Robert to come into the shed, he whispered:

"Father is getting drunk in Blunt's saloon. There are ever so many men there, drinking whisky, and there's another man there talking to them, with a big gold chain, and a big ring on one of his fingers. I heard him tell them it would take something stronger than beer to carry them through the strike. He ordered the whisky, and I saw him wink at Blunt, when he said: 'Give them some of the best.' You've got to do something about it, right off," added Clem, wondering at his brother's silence.

"I was thinking," replied Robert. "I don't know what to do."

"Then ask Aunt Rachel. She knows everything."

"Worse and worse," sighed Mrs. Stearns, when the story was told to her.

She, too, was forced to say that she did not know what to do.

"I believe it would kill me, to see my father drunk," said Mary. "If it comes to that, I shall give up entirely. It won't do any good for me to

work, when there is a drunken man coming home at night, and I can't do it."

"Robert, will you go to walk with me?" asked Aunt Rachel quickly.

"Yes, ma'am, and be glad to," he answered.

"Then we will go in the direction of Blunt's saloon."

"Yes, ma'am"; and the boy's heart beat quick and fast at the thought that his father would be found there.

It was not far. They soon passed it; then repassed it; Mrs. Stearns looking resolutely at the door and window, but never once raising her eyes to the sign.

"I saw your father in that store, and I think I will go in, too," she said, as the door was opened, revealing a group of men, among whom was he of whom she was in search. Robert was about to remonstrate, when she gave him a warning glance, and entered the saloon.

"Perhaps this is not a proper place for ladies, but as I was out walking, I thought I would join my brother," she remarked to the proprietor, who advanced to meet her.

By this time the man who was haranguing the crowd became aware of her presence, and changing his tone, began a plea for the wives and children of working-men.

"They should be cared for; tenderly cared for," he exclaimed. "A man's first duty is to his family, who should be dearer to him than his life. Every true man is ready to make any sacrifice for wife and

children. It is for them he works, and of them he thinks through the long and often weary days."

While this was said, Mr. Winter would take a step toward his sister and then stop, as if undecided what to do; repeating the movement, and yet but slightly changing his position. On the contrary, Mrs. Stearns stood motionless, with her eyes fixed upon the flashily dressed orator, as though unconscious of another's presence.

"I am sure the lady who has honored us will agree with me," he said at length, bowing low to her.

"I do agree with you in thinking that a man's first duty is to his family," she replied in a clear, distinct voice which could be heard by every one in the room. "He should forego all selfish indulgences, and find his happiness with his wife and children; who should be as devoted to him as he is to them. He should spend his money for their comfort, instead of tobacco and liquor, as so many do." Here she paused, looking deliberately around, after which she spoke hurriedly: "I think this must be a drinking-saloon, and it is no place for me."

Had a thunderbolt fallen at her brother's feet, he would have been no more astonished. He knew not what to do. He had committed himself to a course of action his judgment condemned; and despite the effect of the whisky he had drank, he knew the talk to which he had listened, and which he had applauded, was the sheerest of nonsense. The speaker had his own ends to gain, and these accomplished, he cared no more for working-men than for the stones which paved the street.

Mr. Winter was the best workman in the shop where he was employed; and until recently, the nicest jobs had been intrusted to him. But his habits were against him, and only that morning the foreman had remonstrated with him; urging him to give up both beer and tobacco. At the time it was a grim satisfaction to think of the strike that was imminent, and which occurred without warning, at a signal given by one who had no personal interest in any one concerned.

Now what was to be done. He could ask himself this question, but he could not answer it; especially, since his sister had appeared upon the scene of action.

"Give me some more whisky," said the man standing beside him. "It will take another glass to brace me up to meet my wife and sick girl. I promised them a treat this evening, but here it goes down my throat."

The laugh which followed this poor attempt at wit grated harshly on Mr. Winter's ears. He was not yet so far gone that he could make the claims of his family a subject of ridicule; and disgusted with his surroundings, he turned his steps homeward.

"Well," he said to his sister, who confronted him with a sad, stern face.

"It is anything but well," she replied. "Brother Robert, I would not have believed that I should live to be glad that our mother is dead; but I am glad now. Yes, Robert, I am thankful she did not live to see what I have seen to-day. It would have

broken her heart, to know what I know; that you are almost, if not quite, a drunkard."

"Don't talk so, Rachel, don't. I loved mother as well as you did."

"Then why do you disgrace her after she is dead? How could you go to such a place as where I saw you this morning! The men, there, were strikers, were they not?"

"Yes, they quit work, because their wages were cut down."

"And you"——

"Well, I quit with the rest."

"Oh, Robert, how could you do it, with your family living in this unwholesome place, when you ought to give them a comfortable home! If you earn nothing, how do you expect to live at all? Your Robert says you wanted him to go into a cigar factory to work. How much would he earn there?"

"He would make pretty good wages, after he got well learned. He is quick and handy."

"And you thought making cigars, that never ought to be made at all, was the best use you could put him to. Brother, it seems to me you must have lost your senses. It is dreadful for me to talk so to you, when we have been separated from each other so long; but what can I do? What ought I to do? Ought I to see you go down to perdition, and drag your family down, without speaking a word to restrain you? Brother, have you forgotten the lessons your mother taught you from the Bible, and the prayers she offered for you?"

Great drops of perspiration stood on the forehead of the man to whom these appeals were made, yet he remained silent. But his sister continued, until he cried at last:

"What would you have me do? I am no worse than thousands of others. I have not committed the unpardonable sin, that I should be considered an outcast."

"God grant that you have not. I can not believe that you have, and for that reason I can pray for you. But tell me about your work and wages, so that I can understand better how you are situated."

Mr. Winter did this, making his usual complaint that it was all he could do to bring the months around without running into debt.

"If you will give me one-half of what your wages would be, even after ten per cent. reduction, I will engage to provide comfortably for your family," responded Mrs. Stearns. "I will hire a better tenement, and in six months I will have it better furnished. Your children shall be well clothed, and the boys shall be kept in school. Give your family half the loaf, Robert, and see how they will thrive on it. You ought to be able to meet your own personal expenses with what will provide for six, and give you a good home with them."

CHAPTER VIII.

ON A STRIKE.

MRS. STEARNS decided to say no more to her brother in regard to his habits until further developments. As a last resort, she appealed to his wife, whom she urged by every possible consideration to come to the rescue.

"If I thought it would be of any use, I would try," replied Mrs. Winter. "I don't know but the fault is partly mine. I never was much of a housekeeper. After the first month or two, I never could quite suit my husband; and a woman don't like to be told she can't do as well as others, even if she knows it. I am glad you had Mary with you so long. She is a great deal more capable than she would have been if she had stayed with me."

"I think she does as well as you could expect such a girl to do, but it is natural for her to want you to take the lead in managing the house."

"I know it, Rachel. I can look back and see a good many times when I might have done better than I did. You don't know, but after Luke was born, I was so tired, all the time, that a neighbor told me to drink beer, and I got so used to it, that when I don't have it, I miss it. I don't feel as though I could get along without it, but my husband says I never shall have any more."

"I don't believe you really want any more, sister, when you think what miserable stuff it is. You can have something better."

"I should like something better. I don't want to make my family unhappy."

"I know you don't. You want to make them as happy as you can. Now, I have planned some work for to-day, and you can help about it if you will. I found a suit of brother Robert's clothes that can be made over for Clem or Luke, whichever needs them most. The best place for cutting them is in Mary's room. The sun shines in there, so it is warm and pleasant, and you can lie down, if you get tired."

Mrs. Winter was finally persuaded to go to Mary's room, where, after talking for an hour or two with her sister-in-law, who managed to inspire her with something like hopefulness, she lay down and fell asleep ; sleeping so soundly that she was not called to dinner.

There was plenty of well-cooked food, which the younger members of the family ate with a keen relish, but their sister was too much depressed to care for food. Their father drank his coffee in silence ; then went out, and after looking up and down the street for a few minutes, came back to the house.

"Rachel, I have been thinking of what you said to me this morning," he remarked, when left alone with his sister. "You were pretty hard on me, though I don't bear you any ill-will. I wish I was different. I wish everything was different. I made

a mistake in the beginning, but I don't want you to think, because you saw me in a whisky-saloon this morning that I am a regular whisky-drinker. I only take a glass occasionally."

"You drink beer every day, don't you?"

"Yes, I do. I won't deny that, and I am so dependent on it, that it would be hard work to get along without it."

"Try and see. Eat three good, square meals every day, with plenty of strong coffee for drink, and at the end of six months you will wonder you ever spent your money for such a vile decoction as beer. But now that you have quit work, what are you going to do for money?"

"There is more than one shop in the city where I can work."

"Can you do better than where you have been?"

"No, I don't suppose I can."

"Then go back to the old place."

"That would be too humiliating."

"It will come to that in the end, Robert. I have read of strikes, and the loss falls heaviest on the strikers. Would it be any more humiliating to go back, than to see your family suffering for the necessaries of life? How much money have you to carry you over?"

"What I have earned this week, and there is help to come from the Union."

"Don't fold your hands and accept charity, when you ought to be earning good wages. When is your rent due?"

"Next week."

"That must be paid anyway."

"Yes, landlords have a sharp lookout for their tenants. I am paying more rent than I ought to, but this was the only place I could find when I moved here."

"Have you rented this place for any definite time?"

"No, I am a tenant at will, free to go when I please."

Mr. Winter did not intend to be so communicative in regard to his business, but during a half hour's conversation with his sister, she made herself quite thoroughly acquainted with the true condition of affairs.

Here was a first-class workman who had earned good wages for twenty years, without laying by a single dollar. He had a family to support and children to educate, but he had spent comparatively little for them. He married a young, pretty girl, who had found life with him entirely different from what she had expected. He had disappointed her, and her children had wearied her.

She had little energy and less of thrift, but she could and did appreciate the efforts made in her behalf. Many hands had been busily at work through the morning in improving her room. A broken shutter had been thrown wide open, and a pile of old lumber which obstructed the sunlight, had been removed. A picture hung over the old chest of drawers, and a clean white curtain was looped back with a bit of bright ribbon.

From the first, Mary had intended to take her aunt

to call on Mrs. Landaff, but there was so much needing to be done at home, that after introducing them to each other, she left them to make their own acquaintance. The visitor felt at once that she had found a friend, and the two were soon discussing ways and means for effecting a change in Mr. Winter's household.

"My son has the letting of some houses, and there is a good tenement to be vacated next Monday," said Mrs. Landaff. "The rent is only a dollar a month more than your brother is paying, and there are two more rooms, with the sun shining into every one of them. If you could manage it, they would all feel better in a new place. There will be whitewashing all through, and the front room to be painted and papered, but the paper and paint can be put on after they move. We might go and look at the tenement."

This they did, and it was in every way so much more desirable than the one now occupied by her brother's family, that Mrs. Stearns determined the change should be made. Naturally, the strike was considered, when Mrs. Landaff remarked:

"There is a waste of time and money, as long as a man is idle, and besides, idle men are hard to influence for good. It will cost your brother something to go back to his work now, but it will be easier for him than three months from now."

CHAPTER IX

HALF THE LOAF.

THE foreman of the shop in which Mr. Winter had been employed received a call from Mrs. Landaff, who was a friend of his mother.

"I wish you had asked almost anything else of me," he said, after listening to her request. "We make it a point never to urge the return of a man who leaves us because of dissatisfaction with his wages. Of course, we should offer no extra inducements. It was only after long and serious debate, that the company decided to make the reduction of which the men complain, and having made it, they will abide by it. Winter was the best man we have ever had until he became such a confirmed beer-drinker. Since then he has not been so reliable."

"But wouldn't you be willing to give him another chance, if he would give up drinking beer?"

"Certainly; we should be glad to have him come back to-morrow morning, but he better throw away his pipe with his beer-mug."

"Well, Harold, would you mind going to him yourself to-morrow morning, and tell him what you have just told me? You might be doing the best deed of all your life. It is the man's soul I am pleading for, and the souls of his family. Remember that, Harold; and remember, too, that in the day

of judgment, his soul may be required at your hands."

"Mrs. Landaff, you have gained your point, as usual. I will see Winter in the morning, and after what you have said, you can trust me to do my best to influence him."

True to his word, Harold Sutton appeared at the door of the poor home which beer had cursed, and presently Will Winter whispered to his aunt:

"The boss of the shop has come for father to go to work again. The others will be awful mad if he does, but I wouldn't mind anything about that, would you?"

"No, I shouldn't," was replied, and then Will hastened back to his post of observation, from which he could see if not hear.

The interview was prolonged. There was evidently a reluctance on Mr. Winter's part to accept the conditions offered. When he came in he made no allusion to what had occurred, but after eating his breakfast, he said abruptly:

"The strike is ended as far as I am concerned. I am going to the shop; and, Mary, there is a dollar for dinner."

He waited for no reply to this announcement. At noon no one asked him any questions, but Robert, who had watched him closely while on the street, was positive that he did not visit any saloon, although repeatedly asked to join an old comrade in drinking.

"I tell you, wouldn't it be a big thing for us if father should give up beer and tobacco?" exclaimed

the boy. "He hasn't smoked a whiff to-day; I know he hasn't. He couldn't smoke in the shop, and I have watched him the rest of the time."

In the evening Mr. Winter had another interview with his sister, who, to use her own words, worked and prayed hard all day.

"I have lived through one twenty-four hours without beer or tobacco; but whether I can keep it up is more than I know," he said seriously. "But there is one thing certain. Tobacco must go first. I can never endure the tobacco thirst without beer. There was not another man in the shop to-day, except Sutton, and there is a drive of work. If I was as I used to be, ten years ago, I could earn two dollars more before going to bed, but I can't trust myself now. The half loaf would be larger if I could."

"It would be large enough as it is, if your family could only be sure of it."

"They shall have it. I can promise that, whatever happens. They shall have half I earn, whether much or little."

"And the other half, brother?"

"I can not promise about that."

He was up early, the next morning, but Mrs. Stearns was early as he; so that, if he intended going to the saloon, he had no opportunity. After breakfast she walked with him to the shop, thus preventing all annoyance from disaffected workmen.

Mrs. Winter made a great gain that day. She was interested in what was going on around her,

and even talked of what she could do for her family if she had money at her disposal.

"Mother used to say I had a knack for cutting and fitting, and making old things over; but it is so long since I tried, I had almost forgotten about it. I think I could make you a real pretty apron, Mary."

"I wish you would," Mary replied, delighted at the change in her mother. "I have some money left from my marketing; enough to buy the material for an apron, and you and Aunt Rachel can go and buy it."

"Yes, and while we are out we will call on Mrs. Landaff," said Aunt Rachel. "I know she will be glad to see us."

Of course Mrs. Winter made many objections to going out, but these were overruled. She was sensitive in regard to her personal appearance, and this was considered a sure sign of improvement. The shopping was accomplished, the call made, and the tenement, soon to be vacated, examined. Mrs. Stearns was rejoiced that the tenement was approved.

"It seems as though, if we could move in here, we could start new again," said her companion. "It would be the making of the boys, and Mary could have such a pleasant room, it wouldn't be so hard for her to live with us."

There were better days in store for the family which had fallen so low. Mr. Winter had not been consulted in regard to moving; but there was no doubt that he would acquiesce in the plan.

Thus far he had been unmolested, but there were

two parties who felt themselves aggrieved by his defection: the saloon-keepers, and the striking workmen. They proposed to bring him back into the ranks; by *fair* means, if these proved effective; by *foul* means, if these failed.

On his way home, the second evening after returning to his work, he encountered several of his old comrades, who insisted that he should go with them through the street he wished most to avoid. When opposite the beer-saloon, which had been his favorite resort, they attempted to force him to enter; which so aroused his anger, that he tore himself away, and hurrying through a back alley, hoped thus to elude them. But in this he was mistaken. They met him again near Blunt's whisky-saloon, and made another push to overpower him.

"Come in and have a social time with your old friends," said the smiling proprietor, throwing the door wide open.

"Never, so help me God!" cried the now furious man. "I am not to be driven by a hundred of you. I will never enter this saloon alive. Things have come to a strange pass, when a man is to be driven into a trap like a wild beast. Hands off. Go where you will, but don't try to drive me."

By this time a policeman interfered, and Mr. Winter was allowed to go his way without further molestation.

"The men were half drunk," he said when describing the encounter. "They have been drinking hard since they quit work, and nobody knows where they will stop."

"Where will *you* stop?" asked Luke, by no means realizing the full import of his question.

"Stop!" repeated the father. "Where will I stop? I *have* stopped. I have smoked my last whiff of tobacco, and drank my last glass of beer or whisky."

"Good for you, father," exclaimed Luke. "I will swear off with you, and we will see what we can do."

"So will I," rejoined Clem.

"And I too," added Will.

"As for me, I swore off more than a year ago," said Robert.

"Thank God," said Mrs. Stearns reverently. "Let us thank Him on our knees."

CHAPTER X.

AN ERRAND OF MERCY.

How Mr. Winter lived through the next two weeks he hardly knew. There were times when it seemed to him that the craving for his old stimulants would drive him insane. He counted every hour of the day as bringing him nearer to the night, and every hour of the night, as bringing him nearer to another day. He was insensible to the jeers and ridicule heaped upon him, because of the mental and physical torture he endured in the conflict with himself.

His family had moved from the old, dismal tenement into one made bright and cheerful with the sunlight which flooded the rooms. His wages, paid each Saturday night, had been divided, as promised, and one-half placed at the disposal of his wife and daughter. He was ready to give the whole, but this was not allowed.

"Half a loaf, and only half," said Mary, who was held responsible for the marketing. "That was the agreement, and we will abide by it."

"But I can never spend so much on myself," he replied. "It is not much I need besides what I share with the rest of you. I shall soon have a large surplus."

"Which you can invest for your own benefit, father, in the way that will do you most good."

His sister said to him much the same; and as for his wife, she was in a state of constant surprise. She was surprised at the change in her husband; surprised that so much of comfort could be purchased for so small an amount of money; and most of all, she was surprised at what she was, herself, able to accomplish.

She caught the spirit of activity from her family; and worked, sometimes, quite beyond her strength. She had forsworn beer; taking in its stead a simple tonic prepared by her sister-in-law.

There was economical planning to save in one place, that more might be spent in another; yet three good substantial meals were placed upon the neatly laid table every day. There was strong coffee for the father, tea for the mother, and plenty of rich milk for all who chose to drink it.

Thanks to Aunt Rachel's energy and industry, the boys were made ready for school. The two weeks of her proposed visit had lengthened into three, and the time for her return could be no longer delayed. Mary was almost disheartened at the thought of being left, but she was encouraged to hope for the best.

"You will have six to help you," said Mrs. Stearns, as they talked of the future. "It will be better for you all to depend upon yourselves. Your father is having a hard battle, but I believe he will conquer. You must persuade him to attend church with you. There was a time when it seemed to me he was almost persuaded to be a Christian; and now, if ever, he needs the safeguard of religion. I am thankful

the boys are fairly enlisted for the Sunday-school, but you must remember that they will need constant encouragement. I shall go home, feeling that you are all doing well."

"O, Aunt Rachel, I wish I could go with you. It tires me to think of what is before me. I feel so old too. It seems as though I had lived a great many years since I came here, and now, if things go wrong after you leave us, I shall think the fault is mine."

No wonder that this young girl shrank from the responsibilities which had been thrown upon her. The work had been well begun; but to effect its purpose, it must continue. While there was no lack of money for comfortable living, there was sometimes lack of strength to make it most available.

Mrs. Landaff's friendship never failed them; and now that they lived in an adjoining house, they consulted her on all occasions. Ernest Landaff exerted a strong influence over the boys of the family, who regarded him with profound admiration. Like his mother, he delighted in being of service to others, and was quick to see where this could be done.

"There is trouble in store for the men who struck with Mr. Winter," he said, one evening, when he came in from his work. "They have been idle two months, and the result has not been what they expected. They have neglected their families, and spent more than half their time in drinking-saloons or places no better. The Union has notified them that, after this week, they must expect no more assistance. Of course the saloon-keepers will not

trust them unless there is a prospect of being paid."

"All the better for the men," replied Mrs. Landaff.

"I know it is, and I wish they would see it so. Three-quarters of the money given by the Union has been spent for beer, whisky, and tobacco. I suppose that seems a large estimate to you, mother, but when a man accustomed to their use has no employment, he drinks and smokes, almost as a necessity, to kill time, which hangs heavy on his hands. One of the strikers has a sick daughter, about twelve years old, who is really suffering for the want of proper food. One of the shop hands told me about her to-day, and I thought you and Mary Winter better go and see her."

"Why not go this evening, Ernest? If the child needs help, the sooner she has it, the better. A great deal may happen before to-morrow."

When a good deed was to be done, Mrs. Landaff was not one to delay its performance. So she, with her son, called at Mr. Winter's, where the story was told.

"Ray has been just wild ever since he left the shop," said Mr. Winter. "I have seen him nearly every day, and I have never seen him when he was quite sober. I think he has given up drinking beer, and taken to whisky. I am sorry for Alice and her mother. Ray isn't a bad-hearted fellow, but men who do as he is doing forget their families at home."

"Why don't you carry something real good to the sick girl?" now asked Clem. "And you might talk to the man, too, father. You ought to know how," added the boy.

It was the first time Mr. Winter had thought of working to reform others; but after a little consideration, he decided to accompany Mrs. Landaff and his daughter on their errand of mercy.

"We have come to see your sick girl," responded the elder woman, when they were invited to enter the plain room, which contained not a single unnecessary article of furniture.

"I have hardly a chair to offer you, but any one who comes to see my Alice is welcome," replied the mother.

Mr. Winter said nothing; but he carried a basket, from which he took several packages, each containing some delicacy to tempt the appetite of an invalid. Mary was obliged to speak for him, which she did in the kindest possible manner.

"I can never thank you enough," exclaimed Mrs. Ray, with tears in her eyes. "Alice has had nothing to-day but corn-meal gruel. I thought the Lord had quite forgotten us. I could bear it for myself, but Alice could hardly swallow the gruel."

"Where is your husband?" asked Mrs. Landaff.

"I have not seen him since morning," answered Mrs. Ray. "I don't know where he is, but likely he is somewhere where there is liquor. Alice don't like to have me say it, but what else can I say? Curse the beer and whisky, and—— But I won't curse the men who sell it. They will have enough to suffer, without my curses."

CHAPTER XI.

SOMETHING TO DRINK.

Mr. Winter stayed to hear no more. Every word condemned his own past life. He, too, had forgotten promises, ignored responsibilities, and neglected his most sacred duties. He was scarcely less guilty than his old comrade, Ray, who had left wife and child to depend upon others. He rushed from the room, without speaking to the sick girl, sympathy for whom had brought him there.

Mrs. Landaff and Mary remained; the latter soon making the acquaintance of Alice Ray, and receiving the heartiest thanks for unexpected kindness. The child had been so tired and so anxious, waiting for the return of her father, who promised to be home early.

"I always think he means to come, no matter how many times he doesn't come," she said with a sigh. "He would be good, if it wasn't for the bad drink. I know your father is good, or he wouldn't have brought me so many good things. Couldn't he talk to my father, and tell him how much better he could be? You ask him to, won't you?"

"Yes," answered Mary, wondering how she should make the request.

Meanwhile as Mr. Winter was walking rapidly

down the street, he met Mr. Ray, to whom he said cordially :

"Good-evening. I am glad to see you. Come home with me, and let us have a talk together."

"Will you give me something to drink? I couldn't think of talking when I am so dry," was replied.

"I will give you something to drink and something to eat. So come right along with me."

Evidently, Ray was out of funds, or he would not have been on the street at that time in the evening. He was in a reckless mood, and went with Mr. Winter, because anything was preferable to going home. He had gambled away what little money he had in the morning, and knew not where he was to get more.

"Do you live here?" he asked, as his companion stopped before a respectable-looking house. "I thought you lived further down. I don't see how you can afford to pay rent in such a house as this."

"Come in, and I will tell you all about it, besides a good many other things, it will do you good to know," was replied.

The front room, which the boys had already learned to call the parlor, contained but few articles of furniture; yet, as the evening was warm, Mr. Winter invited his guest to a seat in this room. Then he went to the kitchen, and asked his wife to make some strong coffee, and send it in by Robert, with sugar and milk, and whatever else would suit the appetite of a tired, discouraged man.

Ernest Landaff, who was giving the boys a lesson in simple mechanics, begged the privilege of pre-

paring the coffee, which he was allowed to do, and also to arrange the tray Robert carried to his father.

"Coffee!" muttered Ray, beginning to suspect his host of some concealed purpose in bringing him there. "Did you invite me to come home with you for the sake of drinking a cup of coffee?"

"Yes, for that, and the talk we are going to have," was replied frankly. "It is what I drink, and it does me good. It will do you good too. Put in plenty of sugar and milk, and then take a sandwich for a relish. After that, you can try some of my wife's gingerbread. Coffee is a good deal better for us both than beer, and this is a better place than a beer-saloon for us to spend our evenings in."

Mr. Ray was entirely at fault. He knew not what to say, but he was thirsty, and the coffee was good. So he drank; and after some urging, he proceeded to eat; declaring, as he did so, that he had never relished any food so much. Then he drank more coffee, and gradually his reserve gave way.

"Is the shop full?" he asked somewhat hesitatingly.

"Your place is not permanently filled," answered Mr. Winter. "There is a chance for you to come back, if you come soon, and accept the conditions."

"What are the conditions?"

"The company have posted a notice that no man will be employed by them who drinks beer or any other kind of liquor."

"Then I shall never do another stroke of work for them. It is none of their business what I drink. I am a free man, not a slave to them or any one else.

I shall do as I please. You may drink slops as long as you want to, but I am bound to have something stronger."

In his excitement the speaker would have rushed from the room, but his host detained him, saying in an earnest tone :

"Ray, I know as well as you do that the Union has shut down on you, and you must go to work, or starve, or beg. You and I have drank together, and spent our money, when our families ought to have had it. A large part of what I earned went for beer and tobacco, and sometimes for whisky ; but I never calculated exactly how much, until I quit the whole thing. We are living now on half of my wages, and we live well enough. Perhaps you have given your wife more money for her house-keeping than I gave mine, though she wouldn't need so much. There are seven of us, and only three of you. I have five children, and you but one."

"Only one, and she, poor thing, is sick. That makes me think. I promised to carry her something good to eat, to-day, but when I got with the men, I forgot her. I don't know what she will do. There wasn't much for her or her mother, and I haven't a cent left to buy anything for them."

"They have all they need for to-night and to-morrow."

"How do you know? Has any one told you? Have you seen them?"

"Yes, I was coming from your room when I met you. I carried them enough, so they will be comfortable for a day or two. We heard how badly off they were, and went to help them."

"Don't tell me my wife and child are objects of charity. Don't tell me that my Alice and her mother are beggars."

"They did not beg. One of our neighbors told us that your sick girl needed different food from what she had; so I spent a dollar or two for her. And, Ray, I don't think I went there any too soon. My daughter is there now, and if anybody can do your Alice good, she can."

"Mercy! what have I come to!" exclaimed Ray. "Winter, tell me what to do. I believe I have quite lost my head. My rent is due to-morrow, and my pockets are empty. I have given Blunt an order on my week's allowance from the Union, and there is no more to come. What shall I do? For pity's sake tell me."

"Do as I did. Swear off from beer, tobacco, and whisky, and go back to work."

"But I can't ask Sutton to take me back; and besides, Winter, I don't believe I could live on the cold-water plan."

"Live on the coffee plan, as I do. You would have a rough fight, but you have only to keep steady at it, and you will come out ahead. Do it for the sake of your wife and your Alice, if not for yourself. Go to Sutton to-night, and ask him to let you take your old place to-morrow. He will make it a condition that you stop drinking, but you ought to do that anyway."

"How about tobacco?"

"He will leave that to yourself. But I tell you that tobacco must go with the beer, or you will be

crazy with thirst. Come, Ray, I will go to Sutton with you."

"I can't. I never can come down to that. I would rather try my luck somewhere else."

"You can do better in the old place than anywhere else. You have nothing to live on, either, while you are hunting up another place. Be a man, Ray, and build yourself up where you have let yourself down. The men working at our trade, even with the cut-down, can make good wages. You know that as well as I do; and if we are poor, after working as many years as we have, it is our own fault."

CHAPTER XII.

A HELPING HAND.

In her second appeal to Harold Sutton, Mrs. Landaff was too late. Mr. Winter had been there before her, and with him was Mr. Ray, who had hardly recovered from what was little better than a long debauch. He could not speak for himself, but he endorsed all that was said in his behalf, and promised to abstain from the use of all intoxicating drinks. "If I go to drinking again, you will never see me afterward," he said, with an emphasis which gave to his words a fearful meaning. "I will never ask you to give me a second trial."

"I trust there will be no need of that," replied Mr. Sutton. "Your friend, here, is to be surety for your good conduct, and I shall be glad to have you back at work. If I was in the habit of speaking in public, I should certainly come out as a temperance lecturer. The money of too many men goes into the till of the saloon-keeper, instead of being spent for their families.

"Why, my friends, if I had drank beer, or whisky, or even used tobacco, I don't know but my mother's family would have been in the poorhouse. My father died when I was fourteen years old, and there were five children younger. When the expenses of

my father's sickness and burial were paid, my mother had left only ten dollars, with enough of plain furniture for plain housekeeping.

"It was not my father's fault that he was poor in this world's goods, but it was a blessing to us that he was rich in a consistent religious character. He looked far into the future for his children; and seeing the danger to which they would be exposed, warned us to avoid it. He called us around his death-bed, and there exacted from us a promise never to touch the cursed drink. We have all kept the promise, and to this day I do not know the taste of any intoxicating liquor."

"I wish I could say that," responded Ray earnestly. "I began with beer when I was a boy, and here I am, so poor that my wife and my Alice must be fed by my neighbors."

"Feed some other man's wife and child, and so pay the debt," was replied. "There is only a step between poverty and independence. When you have made those dependent upon you comfortable, and you are comfortable with them, it needs only a few dollars in your pocket to make you as rich as your neighbor. Ask Winter about it. He says his family are living on half a loaf; half of his wages."

"I don't see how he can do it," said Ray.

"I do, because I know, by experience, how much of real, solid comfort can be bought with comparatively little money. I didn't tell you that, with what we children could earn, and our mother's economy, we kept together and had a respectable home, with enough to eat and drink. We were clothed, too, so

that we went to church every Sunday; and, my friends, there were months and months when we had no more than a dollar a day to meet all our expenses. Mother did the planning, and made the most of what we had. It was close work, but we came out all right. How do you think it would have been if my brothers and myself had taken to beer and tobacco?"

"You would have been as poor as I am," answered Ray; adding: "I thank you, Mr. Sutton, for giving us this bit of your experience. I didn't know you had been down on a level with us."

"Bless you, friend, I began at the foot of the ladder, and worked my way up. I worked hard too. There is not a man in the shop who has worked harder than I have, and I must keep on working."

It may be that Harold Sutton was moved to speak thus frankly by a remark of his old friend, Mrs. Landaff, who said to him: "Remember the way you have come, and have a kind word and a helping hand for others who are climbing the hill."

Nothing else could so have touched the heart of Mr. Ray; and when he went home, late that evening, he was like a child trying to walk in a new path.

"O father, I spread the table for you long ago," cried Alice, reaching out her hands toward him. "A good man came and brought me ever so many things. There was a nice old lady with him, too, and a girl, just four years older than I am. The man didn't stay long, but I had a real nice time with the girl, and she promised to come again. I

told mother I wanted to set the table for you, and she bolstered me up in a chair, so I could."

Alice was so eager to recount the events of the evening, that she gave her father no opportunity to speak, until she had quite exhausted her strength. Then she looked at him more closely, and quick to see the change in his appearance, asked :

"What is the matter, father? Are you sick?"

"No," he replied, and then, turning to his wife, said : "I am going back to work in the morning, and when I come home at night, I will bring you every cent I earn. There will be only a day's wages, but that will be more than you have had this long time."

"What do you mean?" asked Mrs. Ray, coming close to her husband, and looking him steadily in the face.

"I mean—I mean—that I am going to be different. I have had supper at Winter's, and he went with me to see Sutton, and "—— Here he broke down and could say no more. He, with his wife, knelt by their daughter's couch, where they all wept ; scarce knowing why, and yet unable to restrain their tears. It was nearly morning before he slept, yet he was in season for his work ; and true to his word, he carried his day's wages home and placed the amount in his wife's hands.

With this she was able to provide better food than usual for the Sabbath. Alice, too, had her share, in addition to what Mr. Winter had brought to her.

Ernest Landaff carried in some papers for Sunday reading ; yet with all the home attractions, Mr. Ray

was restless and impatient. At evening, when Mr. Winter called to invite him to attend a service in a chapel near by, he would have been glad to accept the invitation.

"But I never can be seen with these shabby clothes beside your new suit," he said regretfully. "I am too proud for that, low as I have gone."

His friend did not stop to urge him to change his decision; but going directly out, soon returned in his working dress, saying:

"Now you have no excuse."

"That is true, Winter, and I thank you for taking it away. I am glad to go with you."

So in one of the back pews of the chapel sat two roughly dressed men, listening as for their lives to the old prophet's invitation: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."

This invitation was repeated over and over. It was enforced by the most tender personal appeals; every word emphasized, and every motive urged for its acceptance.

When the short sermon was ended, the speaker asked any one present who had not yet drank of the waters of life, but who desired to do so, to manifest this desire by rising.

No sooner was this nvitation given, than Mr. Ray sprang to his feet; forgetting all things else in the one great longing which filled his heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WORKING-MAN.

"ANOTHER temptation, and another unprincipled capitalist to take large slices from the working-man's loaf," remarked one gentleman to another, as they were standing opposite the saloon, the opening of which had so troubled Robert Winter.

"Yes, and the strangest part of it is: the working-man seems not to realize how large a part of his loaf is thus taken away from him," was replied.

"He does not realize it. But now that we are upon the subject, have you ever thought that, with few exceptions, the men of this country are all working-men?"

"I *have* thought of it, and I consider it unfortunate that those who follow certain occupations should be singled out as pre-eminently the working-men. I am not sure but it has something to do with the feeling of antagonism between labor and capital."

"I am quite sure that it has. Those who work under the direction of others are inclined to consider their employers as mere task-masters, wresting from them unrequited labor. For one, I was never so happy as when I worked on a fair, living salary. I knew exactly how much I could spend, and still lay by a little every year. I am richer than I was

then ; but I work harder and have a thousand times more anxiety."

"That is my experience; and besides being anxious for myself, the older I grow, the more anxious I am for my neighbors. I am both grieved and indignant, when I see so many drinking-saloons opened in all parts of our city, sapping the very life of our community, and bringing poverty to thousands of families."

The gentlemen who had expressed their opinions thus freely, passed on, without observing a bright-eyed boy who, basket in hand, stood where he could hear all they had said. This boy was Luke Winter, always on the lookout for new ideas, as his first question after reaching home proved.

"Mary, what kind of a loaf is the working-man's loaf?" he asked eagerly.

His sister looking up in surprise, and giving him no direct answer, he proceeded to repeat what he had heard.

"I understand it now," she said. "A working-man's loaf is his wages."

"I see, I see," exclaimed Luke. "That is it exactly, and that gentleman told the truth about the saloon-keepers taking big slices. They are just like some boys when they want a bite of an apple. They open their mouth as wide as they can, and take every bit they can get. The man in the new saloon asked me to do a job of work for him this morning, and said he would pay me well for it; but I told him I wouldn't stay 'round a saloon for a dollar a minute, and I wouldn't; would you?"

"No; you must keep out of the way of temptation, if you would keep your pledge."

"I mean to. The fellows I used to go with are all down on me, but I don't care for that. I just keep preaching to them; and telling them how much better off they would be, if they would take the same pledge I have. Wasn't it awful, to live as we used to?"

"It was awful to me."

"It would have been to me, if I had known enough. I see now all about our half loaf, as Aunt Rachel called it. It means half of father's wages, and it is a pretty big piece, when he earns as much as he did last week. I should think we might almost have a carpet for the parlor."

"We can, almost, but not quite."

"O Mary, what does genius mean? Ernest Landaff says Robert is a genius, and I want to know what that means. There are so many things I want to know, I am afraid I never shall find them all out. I think of more things all the time. I waked up in the night, and I wanted to go into your room and ask you lots of questions; but I went off to sleep, and this morning something else crowded them out of my mind."

A "sharp boy" was Luke Winter, as everybody who knew him said, and as his father had frequent occasion to remember. The idea of the working-man's loaf had taken full possession of him. He never saw a man going into a drinking-saloon, without calculating how large a slice would be left on the counter.

"That is what is the matter with so many women and children who don't have enough to eat," he said, one day, to his father. "I tell you, I don't mean to make bread for saloon-keepers to gobble up."

When talking with Mr. Ray upon this subject, Mr. Winter expressed the same opinion; his companion replying:

"If men realized they were spending more money for liquor and tobacco than for their families, I believe they would stop. The truth is, Winter, I never stopped to think anything about it. I earned my money, and when I had it in my pocket, I spent it for what I wanted first. If anybody had told me then that I was a fool, I should have resented it, but they would have told the truth."

"I was a fool, too, Ray, but I can not say that I never thought how much money I was spending. I did think, and it made me cross; but I had such a craving for beer and tobacco, that I didn't care for anything else. I don't know where I should be, by this time, if I had kept on. Mr. Sutton thinks it a moderate estimate, that one-quarter of all the money paid to mechanics and common laborers, in this city, is spent for what really injures them. I should set it higher than that. In the last two years I have not averaged to spend as much as a quarter of my wages for my family."

"Neither have I, and all the time my poor sick girl has been pining for the want of what I would not give her. May God forgive me, and help me to do better in future. You have five children, and I have only Alice. I shall do all I can for her."

"And I shall do all I can for my five."

"You ought to, Winter. Robert can fill your place at the lathe, and more too, if you give him a chance."

"He shall have a chance, and so shall the rest of my children. My wife and I begin to talk of sending Mary to school. We haven't said anything to her about it, but we think we can manage to bring it around."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PRIZE.

It had been Robert Winter's ambition to know as much as Ernest Landaff; but when he took the prize for the best mechanical drawing—a prize for which this friend also competed—he was utterly amazed at his good fortune.

"Why, Mary, it almost takes my breath away, just to think of it," he said to his sister. "I can hardly believe it; and it seems to me now that the prize really belongs to Ernest. Mr. Otterson has always said he was a splendid draughtsman."

"No one doubts that, and Ernest has always said that you are a genius."

"I am what you and he have made me. Think what I was three years ago, when you came home from Uncle Daniel's. Why, Mary, it doesn't seem as though we could live a week as we did then. And look at father. He used to go slouching along through the streets, as if he was ashamed of himself. Now he stands up straight, and puts his feet down fair and square. I am beginning to be proud of him."

"And of mother too?"

"Yes. She has changed as much as father. They have kept right along together. They couldn't help

it, with you doing as much as you have; and I suppose we must thank Aunt Rachel for that."

"Aunt Rachel will be very glad to hear you have gained the prize."

"So am I glad; but I don't care so much for that, as I do for knowing what I want to. The rest of you are welcome to all the praise, and the hundred dollars besides."

Robert's brothers were very proud of him; glad, too, that he had earned so much money.

"Now we shall be all right for Christmas," said Luke, clapping his hands. "I tell you, I have raked and scraped every cent I could get hold of, but I began to be afraid we boys couldn't do our part. You can give fifty dollars, and have fifty for yourself. Won't Mary be surprised, and won't she begin to think she is getting some of her pay for having such a hard time, when she first came to live with us? I had rather wait for the new house another year, and then have more things to put in it."

This question of waiting longer for a new house had been seriously considered by Mr. Winter; and as he could rent a larger tenement in the neighborhood where he had lived, he decided to do so.

He was earning better wages than ever before; doing the finest work in his line, and counted reliable in all things. His children were in school, making good progress in their studies, and ranking high as scholars. The entire family were constant attendants at church, and Sunday-school; respectable and respected.

Mary had developed a talent for music, and her

brothers, who thought there was never another sister like her, resolved that she should have a piano. For a year they had been planning to accomplish this, and Robert's prize made it sure that it would be purchased as a Christmas present.

Uncle Daniel and Aunt Rachel, and all the cousins, were invited to spend the holidays in the city; but the young people were otherwise engaged, so that only their parents accepted the invitation. The presence, however, of these two caused a general rejoicing, and they, in turn, rejoiced at the prosperity and happiness they witnessed.

Christmas morning, while Mary Winter was making an early call upon Mrs. Landaff, the new piano was put in place; and upon her return, Robert attempted a presentation speech. In this, however, he failed; and Luke came to his assistance, by exclaiming:

"It is yours, and we all helped pay for it. Now I hope you won't be sorry you came to live with us when we didn't live decent."

"Sorry!" repeated Mary, looking around from one to another. "I never can thank you enough for doing so much for me."

She could say no more for the sobs which choked her voice; and of them all, Aunt Rachel was first to regain self-control: singing Coronation, as the most fitting expression of her feelings. Others joined; and at last, when Mary played the accompaniment, it was like a grand burst of praise from grateful hearts.

Mingled with so much of gratitude for past mer-

cies, there were bright anticipations for the future; many of which have been realized. Two years of well-remunerated labor on the part of Mr. Winter, with the hearty co-operation of his wife, made it possible for him to build a commodious house, without decreasing the allowance for his children.

Mr. Ray and himself had purchased adjoining lots of land, just beyond the city limits, not long after signing a pledge of total abstinence; paying for them in instalments, and so preparing the way for permanent homes. Their houses stand side by side; their gardens are laid out according to the same plan, and their families are on the most intimate terms.

Mrs. Landaff regretted that they should go so far from her; yet she, too, hopes to have a home near them, when Ernest shall give to her a daughter. Certain it is that Mary Winter will use her influence to accomplish this, and Ernest Landaff is reasonably certain to be governed by her wishes.

It is yet too soon to predict what the future will bring to the boys of Mr. Winter's household, but thus far they give promise of useful and successful lives.

They are still eating from the working-man's loaf; and as Luke says, "a grand, good loaf it is; fresh baked every day, and increased in size, as the appetite of the family demands."

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